YoungStar Evaluation Criteria:

Short-Term Operational Programs 2021/2022

Congratulations!

You are taking an important step on the path of continuous quality improvement by participating in YoungStar. This document will give you the information you need to assess your program's current strengths, identify opportunities for improvement, and prepare for your YoungStar rating.

Let's get started!

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General Information

The care children receive both at home and away from home couldn't be more important. Studies show that children who experience engaging, one-on-one activities in safe, healthy, and nurturing learning environments have a better chance at lifelong success. They're more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to engage in criminal activity and often earn higher wages throughout their lifetime.

The Department of Children and Families is committed to improving the quality of care for all children. YoungStar, Wisconsin's Child Care Quality Rating and Improvement System, is helping to make it happen by:

- Helping programs improve in quality
- Offering financial incentives that support both programs and families
- Giving families meaningful information at https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/parents/resources to make informed care decisions

This work is done in partnership with multiple stakeholders, or partners, who also support high-quality early care and education in Wisconsin:

Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA)
SFTA is a statewide association committed to making every early childhood a great one. SFTA employs Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Observers and Micro-Grant Specialists while directing other YoungStar services in partnership with Child Care Resource and Referral agencies.
- https://supportingfamiliestogether.org/

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agencies
CCR&R agencies are located throughout the state, helping parents find child care, and offering training and support to both families and child care programs. CCR&Rs employ YoungStar Consultants and serve as the local YoungStar offices.
- https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/program/localoffice

Child Care Regulation
YoungStar builds on the basic health and safety requirements set by Wisconsin's Bureau of Early Care Regulation. To be eligible to receive YoungStar services, programs must be regulated and maintain regulatory compliance. Programs out of regulatory compliance are given a 1 Star rating and are not able to receive Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy authorizations. You can find three years of regulation history and YoungStar rating information on the Child Care Finder website.
- https://childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov/Search/Search.aspx

The Registry
The Registry provides a listing of training opportunities throughout the state and assigns career levels to the early education workforce according to each individual's education and training background. YoungStar accesses information from The Registry to verify the education and training of lead program staff.
- https://www.the-registry.org/

Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA)
WECA is a statewide agency offering professional development, advocacy, and support to early childhood providers. WECA administers the T.E.A.C.H. and REWARD programs, making scholarships and salary stipends available to child care providers.
- https://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/programs/t-e-a-c-h

Participation

Participation in YoungStar is voluntary. However, programs that wish to accept Wisconsin Shares payments from families are required to participate.

There is no cost for programs to participate in YoungStar. In fact, YoungStar provides low-cost training, free consultation and coaching, and targeted micro-grants to support a program's quality improvement efforts.

Programs choose the type of rating they would like. To achieve a 3 Star rating or higher, a program must either receive an onsite rating or be accredited by a YoungStar approved accrediting body or Head Start grantee.

Contract and Renewal

Programs interested in participating in YoungStar for the first time must submit an initial contract to their Local YoungStar Office. An initial YoungStar contract can be found on the Department of Children and Families website.
- https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngtar/providers/contract

To continue participating in YoungStar, you must renew your contract every two years. Renewal and off-year service contracts are mailed directly to program and are also available in the Provider Portal.
- http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/provider-portal

Programs are eligible to receive technical assistance and a micro-grant every year, whether it is a required rating year or not.

Before submitting a contract, programs should review all YoungStar policies.
- https://dcf.wisconsing.gov/childcare/providers/policy

Technical Assistance

Once your contract is received with a request for free YoungStar support services, a YoungStar Consultant will contact your program to schedule an initial visit and discuss your program's YoungStar goals.

Your Consultant will be your navigator as you move through the YoungStar process.
- They will support you as you fill out a self-assessment and develop a quality improvement plan
- They will review the YoungStar Evaluation Criteria with you and provide resources and assistance to help you achieve your quality improvement goals
- They will assist you in micro-grant planning and purchasing
- They will help you identify professional development opportunities

Onsite Rating

When you receive an Onsite Rating (earning up to a 3 Star rating), your Consultant will use the YoungStar Evaluation Criteria to assess your program.

How to Use This Document

The *YoungStar Evaluation Criteria* document outlines what will be observed and/or verified for a YoungStar rating. This document should be used to prepare for a rating and to learn more about high-quality early education practices.

The document is organized into four elements of program quality. These elements are further broken down into indicators and items that provide additional details.

The four **Elements** that will be evaluated are:

A. Lead Staff Education
B. Learning Environment and Curriculum
C. Business and Professional Practices
D. Health and Well-Being
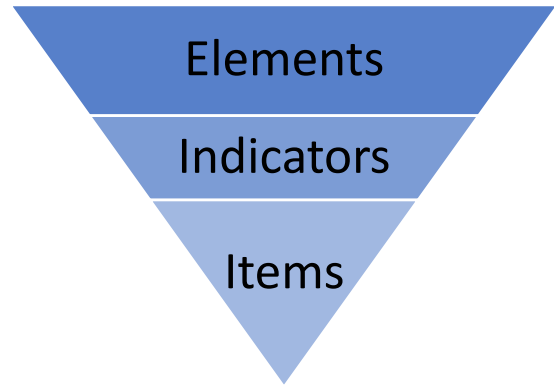
Verification

Throughout the document you will find verification sections explaining how the YoungStar Consultant will verify whether a program meets the requirements or not.

YoungStar Changes 2021/2022

The YoungStar rating system has moved from a point system to a block structure
Programs no longer earn points for indicators, instead they will be rated on the required items for each star level. Short-term operational programs will be rated as follows:

- 3 Star rating - Programs must meet the required criteria only
- 4 Star rating - Programs must be accredited by an approved accreditation body
- 5 Star rating - Programs must be accredited by an approved accreditation body and meet the required criteria for education

Short-Term Operational Program Rating Overview – Block System

Short-Term Operational Programs are regulated early education programs that operate for 14 or fewer consecutive weeks per year.

Category	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Health and Well-Being	Program progresses on healthy nutrition and/or physical activity policy and practice goals	None	None
Business and Professional Practices	Ongoing yearly budget, budget review, payment agreement, and record-keeping Some Family Engagement Practices	None	None
Environment and Curriculum	Developmentally appropriate interactions, materials, and environment, incorporating WMELS and/or School-Age Curricular Framework.	Accredited by approved accreditation body	Accredited by approved accreditation body
Education and Training	**FAMILY CHILD CARE** Provider with Registry Level 7 or higher **GROUP/CAMP** Group leaders with Registry Level 7 or higher for 25% of all groups AND Level 6 or higher for 25% additional groups Site Supervisor/Director with Registry Level 10 or higher. If level 10, must also have 6 business specific credits	None	**FAMILY CHILD CARE** Provider with Registry Level 12 or higher **GROUP/CAMP** Group leaders with Registry Level 9 or higher for 50% of all groups AND Level 7 or higher for remaining groups Site Supervisor/Director with Registry Level 13 or higher
Regulatory Compliance			

★ ★

In Regulatory Compliance	In Regulatory Compliance	In Regulatory Compliance	In Regulatory Compliance

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Updated Developmentally Appropriate Environments (DAE) requirements

- Nature/Science materials are required for programs/classrooms/groups where all children are 24 months or older
- Art materials are required for programs/classrooms/groups where all children are 24 months or older
- The number and type of required organized areas for play has been modified based on age and program type:
    - Family Child Care Program – Programs must have accessible materials provided within at least two *play areas*. A **play area** is a space that is large enough for children to play with accessible, organized materials. Like materials are organized and stored together.
        - An interest center can be used and is considered a type of play area.
    - Preschool – Classrooms/groups with all children over age 4 must have accessible materials organized by type into at least five *interest centers*. An **interest center** is a clearly defined play area created for a particular kind of play with accessible, organized materials.
    - School-Age and Day Camp – Classrooms/groups with all children over age 5 must have accessible materials organized by type into at least five *interest centers.*

Updated Budget/Record Keeping Criteria

- Parent payment agreements must be on file between the program and families that have a Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy authorization
- For YoungStar purposes, Consultants will no longer review tax records
- For YoungStar purposes, Consultants will no longer review menus and meal counts

Updated Healthy Nutrition and Physical Activity Criteria

- After a program initially earns the Healthy Nutrition and Physical Activity indicator, they must demonstrate progress on at least one healthy nutrition and/or physical activity policy and/or practice goal from their previous QIP in order to continue to earn this indicator
- For YoungStar purposes, Consultants will no longer verify the program's allergy policy

Updated Layout

- Both rating requirements and support information are included in this document
- The rating verification sections after each indicator have been moved to a separate document

Requirements for Onsite Rating

To be eligible for an onsite rating, programs must complete a Self-Assessment and develop a Quality Improvement Plan.

Indicator: Program Self-Assessment

Self-assessments help programs become aware of their strengths and areas for improvement. Before a program can receive a rating or earn a micro-grant, they must complete a YoungStar-approved, program-wide self-assessment tool. For a group or camp program, seventy-five percent (75%) of Lead Counselors/Group Leaders and the Site Supervisor/Director must have reviewed/contributed to the self-assessment. This can be demonstrated with a document signed by each staff member. The self-assessment must have been completed within the past 12 months, and not used for a previous rating. Self-assessments should match the age of the majority of children in care.

Programs must choose from the following self-assessments:

Family Child Care
- YoungStar Self-Assessment for Family Child Care
    - English - https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/2018-ys-fcc-selfassess.docx
    - Spanish - https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/2018-ys-fcc-selfassess-s.docx
- HighScope Family Child Care Program Quality Assessment
    - https://highscope.org/our-practice/child-assessment/pga/
- YoungStar-approved accreditation self-studies:
    - National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
    - Satellite Family Child Care Accreditation (in the greater Madison area)

Group or Camp
- YoungStar Self-Assessment for Group Child Care – School Age Programs
    - English - https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/2018-ys-gcc-selfassess.docx
    - Spanish - https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/2018-ys-gcc-selfassess-s.docx
- David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality – School-Age PQA
    - http://www.cypq.org/downloadpqa
- YoungStar Self-Assessment for Day Camps
    - English – https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/2018-ys-day-selfassess.docx
- YoungStar-approved accreditation self-studies:
    - American Camp Association (ACA)
    - City of Madison
    - Council on Accreditation (COA)

Note: ERS tools cannot be used as a self-assessment.

Indicator: Quality Improvement Plan

Programs must create a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) based on the most recent program-wide self-assessment that identifies areas of strength, and at least three areas for improvement. The QIP must also include an action plan for each area of improvement.

VERIFICATION

Self-Assessment:
The Consultant will verify that a program-wide self-assessment has been completed within the past 12 months, document the type of self-assessment tool used, and the date the self-assessment was completed. For group and camp programs, the self-assessment should be contributed to and reviewed by at least 75% of Lead Counselors/Group Leaders, as well as the Site Supervisor/Director. Programs can create and attach a document signed by Lead Counselors/Group Leaders and the Site Supervisor/Director stating that they have reviewed and contributed to the self-assessment.

Quality Improvement Plan:
The Consultant will verify that a QIP has been completed. The QIP should identify areas of strength and three areas of improvement, with a completed action plan for each area of improvement.

Requirements for 3 Star Rating or Higher

To be eligible for a 3 Star rating or higher, programs must create and maintain an accurate Registry Program Profile.

The Registry Program Profile

The Registry Program Profile is used to verify the training and education of Lead Staff members.
The following steps MUST be completed by the program:

1. Create a Registry Program Profile. Visit: http://www.the-registry.org/ProgramProfile.aspx to learn more about how to complete a Program Profile.
2. For a *group or camp program*, complete the "Classroom Tab" within the Program Profile. In this section you will enter each classroom/group within the program, the number of children the classroom/group can have, and the Lead Counselor/Group Leader assigned to work the most peak hours with the classroom/group. Any changes in staffing must be updated in the Program Profile as they occur. The information you enter in your Program Profile is automatically used to verify the YoungStar education and training requirements that help determine your program's YoungStar rating. Your rating is then used to determine the YoungStar Adjustment (if applicable) your program receives through the Wisconsin Shares Subsidy Program.
3. For a *family child care program*, enter the name of the program "Licensee/Owner," and add one "classroom" in the "Classroom Tab" within the Program Profile. You will enter the number of children the "classroom" (program) can have, and the "Primary Family Provider" assigned to work the most peak hours with children. In most cases, the role of the "Primary Family Provider" and the "Licensee/Owner" is filled by the same person. If that is the case, then that person should be listed in both roles in the profile. Any changes in staffing must be updated in the Program Profile as they occur. The information you enter in your Program Profile is automatically used to verify the YoungStar education and training requirements that help determine your program's YoungStar rating. Your rating is then used to determine the YoungStar Adjustment (if applicable) your program receives through the Wisconsin Shares Subsidy Program.

When creating your Registry Program Profile remember:

- Each employee (or family child care provider) needs to have an individual Registry membership-designating your program as their employer- and Career Level (determined by The Registry) before being assigned to a position on the Program Profile
- A person can only be associated with one program's Registry Program Profile at a time. This means a person working at more than one program must choose one Program Profile to be listed on.
- Every classroom/group that is open at least 25% of the time that the program cares for children, between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (up to 40 hours), must be listed on the Program Profile.
    - If the program is open 40 hours or more per week, then any classroom/group that is open 10 or more hours per week needs to be on the Program Profile

Note: Programs can refer to the Maintaining Your Registry Program Profile policy (https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/2016-ys-maintain-profile.pdf) for more information and/or contact the Child Care Information Center (CCIC) at 1-800-362-7353 for assistance.

Element A: Lead Staff Education

Research indicates that providers with higher levels of education are linked to improved outcomes for children. YoungStar verifies Lead Group Leader and Site Supervisor/Director educational qualifications through The Registry. This requires staff to be entered into a Registry Program Profile (http://www.the-registry.org/ProgramProfile/Overview.aspx).

Family Child Care

Indicator: Primary Family Provider Qualifications
Provider with Registry Level 7 or higher – *Required for 3 Stars*
Provider with Registry Level 12 or higher – *Required, with accreditation, for 5 Stars*

Group or Camp

Indicator: Lead Counselor/Group Leader Qualifications
Lead Counselors/Group Leaders with Registry **Level 7** or higher for 25% of all classrooms/groups and Lead Counselors/Group Leader with Registry **Level 6** or higher for an additional 25% of all classrooms/groups – *Required for 3 Stars*
Lead Counselors/Group Leaders with Registry **Level 12*** or higher for 100% of classrooms/groups – *Required, with accreditation, for 5 Stars*

Indicator: Site Supervisor/ Director Qualifications
Registry **Level 10** or higher. If level 10, must also have 6 business specific credits – *Required for 3 Stars*
Registry **Level 13** or higher – *Required, with accreditation, for 5 Stars*

* For YoungStar purposes, 60 credits beyond high school with at least 30 of those credits related to early childhood or school-age care is accepted as equivalent to Registry Level 12.

Note: Registry levels **do not** reflect licensing requirements. Each individual serving in a position must minimally meet licensing requirements for that position.

Each YoungStar Primary Family Provider, Lead Counselor, or Group Leader Assigned to the Registry Program Profile will:

- Have their educational qualifications counted toward the program's YoungStar rating
- Plan, implement, and supervise the daily activities for a group of children
- Communicate with families
- Perform duties under the supervision of a Site Supervisor/Director (for group/camp programs)
- Spend the greatest number of hours between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. with the children in a given classroom/group/family child care program each week

Examples:

- If a group program is open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Sue works 25 hours per week and Ken works 35 hours per week in a given classroom/group, Ken should be listed as the Lead Counselor/Group Leader for the classroom/group.
- If a family child care program is open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and the owner, Judy, works with children from 6:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. and then again from 3:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. (a total of 25 hours per week) and an employee or volunteer, Beth, works with children from 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. (a total of 32.5 hours), then Beth should be listed as the Primary Family Provider.
- If Jenny and Kate both work 8 hours per day, from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., either one could be listed in the Program Profile for that classroom/group/program
- A program is open 24 hours per day. Callie works from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Sarah works from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Callie must be listed in the Program Profile because, even though both she and Sarah work 8 hours per day, only 3 of Sarah's hours are before 6:00 p.m. Therefore, Callie has more hours between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Note: Only the education of the person assigned as "Group Leader" or "Primary Family Provider" in the Program Profile will be considered for this indicator.

Any YoungStar Site Supervisor/Director (Director of Record or Licensee) assigned to the Registry Program Profile will:

- Have their educational qualifications counted toward the program's YoungStar rating
- Be onsite weekly for at least 25% of the total number of hours they work for the program per week (up to 40 hours)
- Be responsible for:
    1. Supervising the planning and implementation of curriculum
    2. Supervising program staff
    3. Staff meetings and orientation
    4. Continuing education for the staff

Example:

- A Site Supervisor/Director who works 40 hours per week (between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.) would need to be onsite for at least 25% of the time, or 10 hours per week, carrying out Site Supervisor/ Director responsibilities in a single, full-day center location. If the Site Supervisor/Director works less than 40 hours per week, they would need to be onsite for 25% of the time they work for the program. The person serving as the Site Supervisor/Director may step in to help with Lead Group Leaders responsibilities if a staff member is ill, during staff break/meal times, when special programming or activities require more adults to be in the room, or for emergencies.

Alternate Options for Director Qualifications

Centralized Administration (for programs with multiple sites)

If the individual in the role of Director is offsite, the program may ask for a variation from the typical YoungStar Director requirements. Responsibilities 1 and 2 (listed above under YoungStar Director) must be performed by a person who is onsite at the center for at least 25% of the total number of hours they work for the program. Responsibilities 3 and 4 may be performed by a person(s) located offsite.

In these cases, the program has two options:

> **Option 1**: List the person who is offsite performing responsibilities 3 (Staff meetings and orientation) and 4 (Continuing education for the staff) as the Site Supervisor/Director.

> **Option 2**: List the person who is onsite performing responsibilities 1 (Supervising the planning and implementation of curriculum) and 2 (Supervising program staff) as the Site Supervisor/Director. If the program wants to choose this option and the person listed as the Site Supervisor/Director is also a Lead Group Leader, the rules for Dual-Role (see below) must be followed.

Dual-Role

In the following cases, programs licensed for 50 or fewer children may have a Site Supervisor/Director who is also listed as a Lead Group Leader in the Registry Program Profile:

- To earn 3 Stars – The person in the dual-role must have Site Supervisor/Director responsibilities for at least 25% of the time the program is open* (up to 40 hours) and meet the educational qualifications for a 3 Star rating
  - For example, if a program is open 40 hours per week, the person in the dual-role would need to be in the Site Supervisor/Director role for 10 hours per week (between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.) and be at a Registry Level 10 or higher (as verified through The Registry Program Profile)

* For dual-role eligibility, "the time the program is open" refers to the number of hours the program can accept children for care. If a program has additional hours where staff are present, but no children can be in care (e.g., staff meetings), these hours do not count toward the time the program is open.

VERIFICATION

All educational requirements will be verified using The Registry Program Profile. The Consultant will verify that the Lead Staff present in the program are the Lead Staff listed on The Registry Program Profile. If the Consultant cannot verify this, the rating will not be completed. For further verification, time sheets or pay stubs may be required.

Site Supervisor/Director Options (if applicable):
To verify alternative options for Site Supervisor/Director qualifications, schedules, pay stubs, timesheets, job descriptions, employee handbooks, and/or employment policy and procedure documentation may be required.

Element B: Learning Environment and Curriculum

Providing a safe, nurturing, and responsive environment is the foundation for supporting the learning and development of all children.

Indicator: Developmentally Appropriate Environments (DAE)

Staff create developmentally appropriate environments by intentionally creating a physical and social environment- including the materials, room arrangement, interactions, schedules, and routines that make up each day- that supports the development of the whole child, focusing on the individual needs and interests of each child, and guided by the *Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards* (WMELS) or *School-Age Curricular Framework* (SACF).

Programs must demonstrate the following:

Item 1: Staff provide developmentally appropriate interactions and promote positive relationships

All the following must be observed:

- All staff/staff and staff/child interactions must be positive or at least neutral
- Staff and children demonstrate enjoyment in being with each other
- Staff respond to children's needs promptly and appropriately
- Staff have developmentally appropriate expectations for children's behavior

At least two of these additional practices must be observed:

- Staff are near children when promoting positive interactions and learning opportunities
- Staff initiate language and literacy activities to support language development (e.g., storytelling, reading books, nursery rhymes, sign language, allowing children time to respond, expanding on children's vocabulary)
- Staff have turn-taking conversations with most children and ask follow-up questions with a pleasant tone of voice
- Staff intentionally create opportunities for all children to engage in peer interaction in ways that are appropriate for each child
- Staff provide children with descriptive feedback for their efforts or accomplishments (e.g., instead of simply saying "good job," staff are more descriptive by saying, "You picked up those blocks; that helps to keep us safe")

Item 2: The environment is organized into interest centers or play areas to support children's meaningful play. Materials in all required interest centers and/or play areas must be accessible for children to use for the entire uninterrupted free choice time period.

- Family Child Care Program – Programs must have accessible materials provided within at least two *play areas*. A **play area** is a space that is large enough for children to play with accessible, organized materials. Like materials are organized and stored together.
  - An interest center can be used and is considered a type of play area.

- Preschool – Classrooms/groups with all children over age 4 must have accessible materials organized by type into at least five *interest centers*. An **interest center** is a clearly defined play area created for a particular kind of play with accessible, organized materials.
- School-Age and Day Camp – Classrooms/groups with all children over age 5 must have accessible materials organized by type into at least five *interest centers*.

Note: The ERS tools include requirements for interest centers at the good or excellent levels. Interest centers needed for school-age classrooms/groups include areas for: reading, blocks, dramatic play, and nature/science. The SACERS-U requires space for privacy where children are allowed to be alone. This space can be created by the children.

Item 3: The following types of materials must be developmentally appropriate and accessible to children in each classroom/group. At minimum there must be:
- One book for each child present at any given time
- Six different examples of fine motor materials
- Six different examples of art materials (for classrooms/programs with all children 24 months or older)
- Two sets of 10 to 20 blocks (for classrooms/programs with all children 12 months or older)
- Five different examples of dramatic play materials
- Five different examples of nature/science materials (for classrooms/programs with all children 24 months or older)
- Six different examples of math materials

Item 4: Accessible materials are reflective of the WMELS five domains and/or the SACF nine content areas, different learning styles, and varied levels of difficulty

- The WMELS five domains and/or the SACF nine content areas must be reflected in the materials offered. School-Age classrooms/programs may be using WMELS and/or SACF
  - The "Approaches to Learning" domain recognizes that children approach learning in different ways. It addresses the importance of how children learn, as well as what children learn. This is demonstrated by offering materials and/or experiences that address children's different learning styles (e.g., visual, kinesthetic/active, auditory).
- At least three types of materials and/or experiences offer children varied levels of difficulty. Materials should be from different learning activities, for example, one from books, one from fine motor, and one from dramatic play.
- Materials in the interest centers/play areas must be considered easily accessible, allowing children to independently reach furnishings, equipment, and materials

Item 5: The daily schedule must include a minimum of 50 consecutive minutes of uninterrupted free choice. Materials in all required interest centers and/or play areas must be accessible for children to use for the entire uninterrupted free choice time period.

Clarifications:

- For programs open more than eight hours, the 50 consecutive minutes cannot be during the first or last two hours of program operation
- For programs open more than four hours per day, 50 consecutive minutes is required
- For programs open less than 4 hours per day, 30 consecutive minutes is required
- For programs with split schedules, the 50 consecutive minutes can be split into two segments of consecutive, uninterrupted time.
    - For example, if a program is open for two hours before school and three hours in the afternoon, the program can split the minutes by having 25 minutes in the morning and 25 minutes in the afternoon

Note: When 50 minutes of free choice occurs outdoors, DAE can be earned if items 2 through 4 are met in the outdoor space where children are playing.

VERIFICATION

The Consultant must verify the elements of a developmentally appropriate environment through observation. If more information is needed, lesson plans, schedules, and/or interviews may be used.

For group or camp programs: All classrooms/groups within a program must meet the requirements listed above. The Consultant will verify all items within this indicator in three randomly selected classrooms/groups. If there are three or fewer classrooms/groups in the program, the Consultant must verify the requirements in every classroom/group.

Element C: Business and Professional Practices

Early education programs that use effective business and professional practices are more likely to provide a high-quality learning environment, stay in business, and interact more sensitively with children and families.

Indicator: Budgeting/Record-Keeping/Payment Agreement

Good planning for any organization, including child care, includes budgeting and record-keeping. Budgeting provides a road map for implementing program goals and objectives. Thoughtful planning, accurate record-keeping, and continuous review is essential to effectively manage an early education program.

Programs must demonstrate the following:

Item 1: The program develops an annual line-item budget including the following:
- Projected and actual income and expenses for the current fiscal year, divided into line-items
    - A program budget must be in place for the current 12-month period, using whatever fiscal year the program has chosen (e.g., if the program is using a fiscal year from July to June, and it is October 2021, the Consultant will verify the budget from July 2021 to June 2022).
    - The budget can be shown in one page covering a 12-month period or can be separated into months or quarters.
- At least one item from the program's QIP must be identified in the budget (e.g., training is identified in the program's QIP and is also an expense in the line-item "continuing education" on the program budget).

Note: For an organization with several sites, each site will need to provide documentation of Item 1.

Item 2: The program reviews the budget annually and adjusts future annual budgets as necessary. A report of actual income and expenses divided into line-items for the previous fiscal year is available and was used to inform the current year's annual budget.

Item 3: The program demonstrates record-keeping practices that track income and expenses

- The program tracks actual income and expenses on a monthly basis.

Note: Family Child Care Providers must demonstrate the following additional two practices

- The program has written documentation of hours worked caring for children in the home (e.g., daily sign-in/out record – license hours alone are not acceptable)
- The program has written documentation of additional business hours worked in the home when children are not there (e.g., menu planning, lesson planning, cleaning, writing newsletters), including the date(s), activities done, and length of time spent on each activity

Note: If the Provider does not live in the place where they provide care for children, hours worked in the home do not need to be tracked.

Note: It is not an acceptable business practice to determine actual income received for the year based on one month's worth of budget information.

Item 4: A parent payment agreement must be signed and on file for all families that have a Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy authorization with the program. The agreement must be present at the location where the child is receiving care. All parent payment agreements must be kept on file for three years after the child's last day of attendance. Programs can use DCF form 5224-E (https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/doc/5224.docx) or create one of their own.

Forms must include:
- The price the program charges for monthly or weekly care
- The days and hours the program operates
- Any discounts or scholarships that are available to parents
- Any discounts or scholarships that the parent is receiving
- The parent's payment schedule
- The program's anticipated closure dates
- Payment expectations for the child's anticipated and unanticipated absences
- Payment expectations for the program's closure dates
- Parent procedures for termination of a child's enrollment
- Program procedures for termination of a child's enrollment

VERIFICATION

The Consultant will verify the following:

- The current 12-month line-item budget
- The QIP, to ensure that at least one item is also noted in the budget
- The previous 12-month budget with actual income/expenses noted
- Notation of when the budget was annually reviewed to inform the current budget
- Evidence of one month of tracking income and expenses
- Documentation of hours worked in the home caring for children (for family child care programs only)
- Documentation of hours worked in the home when children are not present (for family child care programs only)

The program must provide physical copies of the necessary documents or have access to a digital copy of the budget for rating. Documents provided must be updated and completed for each rating year.

If the program has a child enrolled whose family is receiving a subsidy through the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy program, the Consultant will verify all required elements from one parent payment agreement. If there are no families in the program receiving subsidy, the Consultant does not have to verify a parent payment agreement.

Indicator: Family Engagement

Family engagement is an ongoing process that occurs through respectful and responsive relationship building between school-age staff and families. Quality family engagement occurs when programs offer opportunities for all families to be partners in their child's education. Family engagement is different from, but builds on, family involvement. Family involvement occurs when families participate in activities and take advantage of opportunities at their child's out-of-school time setting. This usually means that families attend meetings or special events a program offers. On the other hand, family engagement focuses on listening, welcoming ideas, and encouraging shared decision making. The goal of family engagement is to create partnerships, leading to stronger outcomes for children.

- 3 Star requirement: Programs must demonstrate how they meet **at least one practice** from each of the four items.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN QRIS

Key Features of Family Engagement
Sample Indicators

Communication
- Respectful two-way exchange of information
- Multiple ways to communicate are offered
- Time is made to engage families meaningfully in conversations

Family Needs and Feedback
- Family input guides program planning and policies
- Program is adapted to meet the needs of children and families
- Hiring practices of staff and volunteers reflect family's diverse backgrounds

Collaborative Activities with Families
- Fathers are encouraged to participate in activities
- Opportunities exist for staff and families to learn from one another
- Volunteer opportunities match families' strengths, interests, and skills

Community Resources and Family Support
- Families are connected to community resources
- Support and planning around transitions is provided
- Educational & developmental resources are offered for families to use at home

Item 1: Communication

Quality family engagement includes a variety of practices that encourage communication between staff and families. Quality practices take into consideration each family's communication needs and preferences, building mutual respect and understanding.

Practice 1: Respectful two-way exchange of information

Examples:

    a. Efforts are made to communicate with children and families in their preferred language. Program can access linguistic supports as necessary

    b. A written philosophy supports communication as a way to develop program and family relationships

    c. Family handbooks are provided to families

    d. Families are invited to share what they know about their children

Practice 2: Multiple ways to communicate are offered

Examples:

    a. Regular written communication using multiple formats is available to families (e.g., social media, email, newsletters, calendar)

    b. Families' preferred methods of communication are used (e.g., face-to-face, email, phone, letter)

    c. Bulletin boards are maintained and updated with program information and events

Practice 3: Time is made to engage families in meaningful conversation

Examples:

    a. Staff/Provider schedules allow time for meaningful communication with families

    b. Initial intake or orientation meetings introduce families to the program

    c. Families are notified in advance when changes or transitions will occur (e.g., classroom/group changes, substitute staff, other events)

Item 2: Family Needs and Feedback

It is important that programs understand the needs and goals of the children and families they serve. Asking for, and using, family feedback allows the program to gather family perspectives and continuously improve. Feedback can be collected in a variety of ways (surveys, intake forms, comments, complaint submission processes, exit interviews, child and family strengths, and needs assessments) and must be used to inform program decisions, making the program more reflective of the children and families it serves.

Practice 1: Family input guides program planning and policies

Examples:

    a. Program has a written family feedback procedure explaining how feedback will be collected and used

    b. Program has a family advisory group with active family participation and/or families participate in program decision making

    c. Program completes the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Checklist and findings are incorporated into program planning

    d. Families are invited to share concerns and collaborate with staff to find solutions

    e. Families are encouraged to participate in program evaluations/surveys AND programs demonstrate how the results impact their program decision making

Practice 2: Program is adapted to meet the needs of children and families

Examples:

    a. Family strengths and needs assessments are completed, and a plan for utilizing information gathered is established

    b. Program conducts child assessments and shares results with families in a manner that invites and considers the parent's perspective

    c. Meetings and events are determined by family schedules and needs

    d. Program collaborates with parents to create and incorporate individual written educational and developmental goals for the child and family

    e. Family choice and decision making are promoted

Practice 3: Hiring practices of staff and volunteers reflect families' diverse backgrounds

Examples:

    a. Program can demonstrate that there are racial, ethnic, and cultural similarities between program staff/volunteers and the children/families enrolled

    b. Program uses positive images of diversity on its social media/website and diversity-related cues (e.g., equal opportunity employer statement, link to program's diversity policy) in job postings

Item 3: Collaborative Activities with Families

Families feel engaged when they are provided with multiple opportunities to meaningfully participate in their child's care and education. Programs can offer activities that help to create partnerships with parents to promote healthy child development and family connections.

Practice 1: Families are encouraged to participate in activities

Examples:

    a. Participation of fathers or male role models for a child is encouraged and the program acknowledges that fathers/males can be equally knowledgeable caretakers

    b. Extended family members are invited to participate in program activities acknowledging the various family members that support and care for children

Practice 2: Opportunities exist for staff and families to learn from one another

Examples:

    a. Program offers opportunities for families to share knowledge about their child (e.g., interests, approaches to learning, the child's developmental needs, and the family's concerns and goals for their children)

    b. Regular parent/teacher conferences encourage sharing between the program and the family

    c. Activities encourage the development of parent confidence and competence

    d. Family traditions are shared in classrooms and family photos are displayed

    e. Diversity is reflected in images and languages included on posters, signs, and other program materials

    f. Frequent family participation in the program is encouraged. To ensure that all enrolled families are able to participate in some opportunities, they are flexibly scheduled in consideration of families' employment/education schedules, language preferences, cultural practices, and holiday and religious commitments.

    g. Program facilitates social networking and collaborative opportunities between families

Practice 3: Volunteer opportunities match families' strengths, interests, and skills

Examples:

    a. Program encourages parent volunteer opportunities reflective of the strengths, interests, and skills of each family (with attention given to family capacity and time)

    b. Program facilitates family activities that demonstrate consideration for their needs and interests

Item 4: Community Resources and Family Support

School-age staff can be a critical link between families and community resources. Program staff can fully support families by providing information around community resources that meet their unique needs.

Practice 1: Families are connected to community resources

Examples:

    a. Community resource list developed and shared

    b. Program identifies and engages community partners

    c. Relationships with public and community-based services developed (e.g., health, school districts, social service agencies)

    d. Program has a family resource center area and/or staff provides consultations that include parenting and community service information

    e. Program navigates resources for families, links them to family supports, and provides direct advocacy (e.g., helps make initial phone calls for families, attends IEP's, etc.)

Practice 2: Support and planning around transitions is provided

Examples:

    a. Program plans field trips to future 4K classrooms

    b. Program has a parent meeting to discuss the transition plan for a child to move to a new classroom or program

    c. Families are offered direct support resources such as transportation

Practice 3: Educational and developmental resources are available to families

Examples:

    a. Educational workshops and trainings are offered to families (e.g., information workshops, career workshops, education meetings, parent training)

    b. Training, education, and/or support is provided to families to prepare them to advocate and exercise their rights and responsibilities concerning the education of their children

    c. Program shares child development information across all Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) domains

    d. Program provides resources for extending learning experiences into the home

    e. Program includes home visitation services that include family caregivers and the child

VERIFICATION

Consultants may observe the practices being implemented or the program may show evidence of how they are meeting (or met within the past 12 months) the intent of a practice under an item. Examples of evidence could include:

- Program policies or philosophy
- Meeting agendas
- Staff or Family handbook
- Job descriptions
- Documentation of referrals
- Partnership agreements
- Event flyers
- Schedules, emails, newsletters, text messages
- Introduction and exit surveys
- Communication logs
- Translation services
- Materials for diverse family structures
- Written communications

Element D: Health and Well-Being

Children need access to daily physical activity and nutritious meals and snacks to help them develop lifelong healthy habits. Early education and out-of-school time settings are a key place to continue building these habits.

Indicator: Healthy Nutrition and Physical Activity

Programs can learn more about how to improve their nutrition and physical activity practices by using a self-assessment tool and developing a quality improvement plan specific to nutrition and physical activity.

Programs must demonstrate all the following:

Item 1: Complete a YoungStar-approved nutrition and/or physical activity self-assessment tool(s). For group or camp programs, seventy-five percent (75%) of Lead Counselors/Group Leaders and the Site Supervisor/Director must have reviewed/contributed to the self-assessment. This can be demonstrated with a document signed by each staff member. The self-assessment must have been completed within the past 12 months, and not used for a previous rating. Self-assessments should match the age of the majority of children in care. Multiple self-assessments can be used if desired. Self-assessments help programs become aware of their strengths and areas for improvement.

Self-Assessment Options:

- Birth - 60 Months
    - Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessments for Child Care (Go NAPSACC[1])
      -https://gonapsacc.org/self-assessment-materials
        - Child Nutrition
        - Infant Feeding and Breastfeeding
        - Infant & Child Physical Activity **and** Outdoor Play & Learning
        - Farm to ECE

- School-Age
    - Out of School Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative (OSNAP) – School-Age Programs - http://osnap.org/tools/practice-assessment/introduction/
    - Wisconsin Youth Garden Self-Assessment - https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/resources

Item 2: Develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) based on the results of the completed nutrition and/or physical activity self-assessment. The nutrition and/or physical activity QIP can be added to the program's overall QIP, rather than creating an additional form. The QIP must have been developed within the past 12 months and include:

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[1]Ward D, Morris E, McWilliams C, Vaughn A, Erinosho T, Mazzuca S, Hanson P, Ammerman A, Neelon S, Sommers J, Ball S. (2014). Go NAPSACC: Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care, 2nd Edition. Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and Department of Nutrition, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

- At least three specific goals that strengthen the program's nutrition and/or physical activity policies and/or practices
- Action steps to meet the identified goals
- Timeline for completion of the goals
- Person(s) responsible for accomplishing the goals

Item 3: If the program allows meals, snacks or beverages to be brought from home, the program has a policy which states the program will supplement the meals, snacks and beverages if they do not meet the guidelines established by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Item 4: Programs having met this requirement in the past must also demonstrate progress on at least one nutrition and/or physical activity goal from the previous quality improvement plan.

VERIFICATION

The Consultant will verify that an approved nutrition and/or physical activity self-assessment has been completed within the past 12 months. For group or day camp programs, the Site Supervisor/Director and at least 75% of Lead Group Leaders must have reviewed/contributed to the self-assessment, demonstrated by a document signed by all staff who have reviewed or contributed.

The Consultant will verify that the program has a nutrition and/or physical activity-focused QIP, including areas of strength, three areas of improvement, and action plans for each area of improvement. (This does not have to be an additional QIP and can be added to the program's overall QIP.) The Consultant will verify that the QIP was developed within the past 12 months based on the results of the self-assessment. For programs that have met this requirement in previous years, the Consultant will verify the program has made progress on at least one nutrition and/or physical activity goal from the previous quality improvement plan.

Congratulations!

Now that you've taken steps to improve your program's quality, let's think about what comes next.

1. Celebrate the accomplishments you've made so far!

2. Consider additional high-quality practices you could implement along your path of continuous quality improvement.

3. Introduce your staff to the accreditation tool(s) that fits your program.

4. Your Consultant is a valuable resource – Stay in Touch!

5. Visit http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers